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THE THINGS IMMORTAL

Spiritual Thoughts for Every Day Reading

BY

REV. EDWARD F. GARESCHÉ, S.J.

Author of "Your Neighbor and You," "Your Interests Eternal," "Your Soul's Salvation," etc.

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Archbishop of New York.

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TO THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
MYSTICAL ROSE

PREFACE

THE preceding volumes of this series have met with a reception so extremely kind as to encourage the continuation of the sequence of readings for leisure hours. In the present volume, the same manner of treatment has been preserved as that which characterized the preceding ones, a familiar and colloquial treatment which avoids formality and has been found to help the interest of the reader and to stimulate personal applications. The purpose of these little volumes is not to preach nor exhort, though these are excellent things in their place, but rather to encourage and stimulate those who are good to become still better, and perhaps to induce others, poor sinners, who have ordinarily no sort of taste for spiritual writings, to get into the way of reading a bit now and then as an antidote against the prevalent worldliness and a gateway to better things. We ask, of all who read them, a prayer for the writer.

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THE THINGS IMMORTAL

WE ARE so often busy with the things that perish! The necessities and pre-occupations of our mortal life so often weigh us down and distract our hearts. Our earthly and mortal part, the corruptible body, so tyrannizes over and oppresses our immortal and spiritual soul! Everyone who has any aspirations after heavenly things must experience at times this groaning of the spirit under the necessities of the flesh. The author of the Imitation, who has admirably expressed for all time so many of the motions of men's souls, has given voice also to this groaning. "It is truly a misery," he says, "to live upon earth. The more a man desireth to be spiritual, the more this present life becomes distasteful to him; because he the better understands and more clearly sees the defects of human corruption. For to eat, drink, watch, read, rest, labor, and to be subject to other necessities of nature is truly a great misery and affliction to a devout man, who desires to be released and free from all sin." All litera-

ture, even the pagan, is full of this crying out of the spirit against the oppression of the flesh.

Sad to say, the body has much the advantage in this constant lusting of the flesh against the spirit. It has a thousand needs which must be swiftly answered, a thousand insistent demands which it takes much time and energy to appease. The body, say the old writers on spiritual themes, is like a crumbling wall which must be incessantly shored up and mended, for it is ceaselessly falling into pieces. "You say that I have a soul," said the Chinese merchant to a missionary, "why should I worry about it? It gives me no pain. It grows neither cold nor thirsty nor hungry. It makes no demands on my care. Whereas my body requires all the tending I can give it, and in the end it is to perish despite all my care. Why should I spend time, then, caring for my soul, which takes such good care of itself?" Few Christians would dare to repeat in so many words the saying of this carnal old pagan. Yet, how many are tempted to act on the theory his words express!

As a sad consequence of the Fall, a perpetual tug of natural weakness and sinfulness forever urges us downward, a little farther along the ways of self-indulgence, a little nearer to dangerous paths. By merely allowing ourselves to drift and following the tendencies of our weak human nature we tend always to become more of the earth earthy, and less of heaven heavenly. We must, therefore, be forever urging ourselves on against the inertia of our sloth and the downward pull of our passions. We must remind ourselves forever of the things immortal, lest we be overwhelmed and lost in the things that perish.

It was for this reason that Our Lord bade us so often beware of the world and the things which are of the world. The universe itself is good and was so pronounced by its Divine Creator the time He rested on the seventh day. It is only our misuse of created things which makes them evil for us. The world, therefore, against which Christ warned us so earnestly and repeatedly is the love of things that perish, for their own sake and to the loss of the things immortal. In

proportion as we cleave to created things for their own sake, love them in themselves and without reference to the service of God, are immersed in them to the forgetfulness of His love, in this proportion we are the slaves of the world and sick of the malady of worldliness.

Worldliness is more dangerous to-day because the world was never more various, interesting and appealing and therefore never insinuated itself more subtly than it does to-day into the heart of man. The times are full of color, variety, amusement, change, incident and wonder. Inventions succeed one another with breathless speed and each one brings more comfort, swiftness, variousness into life. The wheels of change spin dizzily and our minds and hearts become insensibly engrossed with the bewildering show. What wonder that unless we take care we become, by slow and unperceived degrees, the victims of worldliness. It is not so much that we deliberately depart from God or turn our back upon His Majesty. Neither do we deliberately forget heaven and the things immortal. But little by little,

as the scum gathers on still waters, our mind and heart become caked over with the dust and scum of worldly thoughts and desires until they cease to mirror the distant loveliness of the sky. It is not any one mote of dust nor flake of foam upon the water that quite obscures the reflection of the sky. So, likewise, it is not any one worldly thought or earthy desire which blots out the thought and memory of God and heaven. Yet, by the falling of many dust motes and the clotting of many bubbles together the face of the waters is filmed over until they quite cease to mirror the sky. In some such way the crowding thoughts and swift impressions that fall upon our hearts and minds from the ceaseless interest and clamor of the world cover them over with a scum that makes us forget the eternal interests and lie in stagnant content unreflecting of the things immortal.

To offset this tendency of our weak nature we shall do well to make special efforts against the forgetfulness and worldliness that threaten us these days. We must brush away, from time to time, the gathering film

of forgetfulness that is obscuring the bright surface of our heart and dimming the heavenly image which it holds. As worldly ideas crowd upon us and worldly interests besiege our soul, we must take care to provide for ourselves strong and serviceable means of renewing the thoughts of heaven. We must teach our hearts to cast off, from time to time, their earthly interests and mortal cares, and to look limpid and clear into the face of the healing heavens.

One of the most effective means for bringing about this cleansing and clearing the waters of our soul is the practice of regularly reading some thoughts which have to do with the things immortal. In the great flood of worldly literature which pours upon us from every side, let us mingle betimes some streams from the literature of eternity. Like the waters of a living spring, rising up cool and fresh and sweet through a stagnant pool and cleansing and healing the murky waters, these thoughts of heavenly things and ponderings on the interests of our soul will refresh and clear our minds and hearts.

Old books on spiritual themes abound but they speak a language not of our time and

their appeal is to the taste of an older day. Some of them, to be sure, like the Imitation of Christ, have a perennial sweetness which gushes renewed for the pious hearts of each succeeding generation. But there is need of new books for the new times, attuned to contemporary thought, suited to the taste of present folk and speaking the language which they like and understand. Let us not hesitate, in this matter of spiritual reading, to follow our own taste and choose from what is offered us of spiritual readings, provided it is from orthodox sources and imbued with the Catholic spirit. Just as intellectual interest helps one's studies and it is easier to learn what we like, so spiritual books which appeal to us and interest us are likely to remain longer in our memory and do us the more good.

But, however we choose our spiritual reading, let us at least make sure that often, if possible every day, some thoughts of a heavenly tinge may come to refresh our minds. Let us at least provide, amid the plaguing and distracting things of time, some memory and some foretaste of the things immortal.

CARRY ON

A very noble phrase was coined and used amid the strenuous and terrible experiences of the Great War. It was on the lips of everyone in France. The soldiers shouted it to their comrades as they met them going to the front. The wounded, as they were being carried in their litters back to the hospitals, cried out to one another and to the still strong and active. The brave mothers and sisters used the phrase at home to hearten themselves to go on with the dreadful struggle against discouragement, anxiety, and actual want, which is their part of the war. One said it to the other in moments of dejection and sorrow, and it was a battle-cry of cheer against despondency and weariness.

In dark moments, in dangerous places soldiers and women and children all cried out (and felt their courage rally): "Carry on! We must fight through and carry on." The plucky perseverance crystallized in this brave phrase is what eventually won the

desperate war. As the great general in chief command declared, "Battles are never lost until the vanquished think so." It is not merely the loss of men that defeats an army, nor the impact of shells, nor the weariness of the struggle. No army is ever thoroughly defeated so long as it can keep up the sturdy resolution to carry on.

On the other hand, victory never rests with the faint-hearted. No strength of arms, nor copiousness of supplies, nor skill in tactics, nor even individual dashes of bravery will supply the want of a determined spirit, a resolution to fight until the end, a willingness to bear all hardships and still carry on, a persevering courage which will not let anything, even personal weakness, even one's own faults, deter one from going forward. These things are at the heart of all successes.

It would be very well for us also in our own lives and in our private wars to foster this same cheerful resolve to carry on. Life has very often been compared to a warfare, since the days of Job and before him, and we can learn many a lesson from the shrewd

tactics which military men have devised to win them victory. Life has many things in common with warfare, because life itself is a succession of battles, open or secret, and we are constantly busy fighting foes within and without us, who must be met with much the same tactics and conquered by much the same perseverance as that which snatched victory from the midst of bloody strife in France.

In our own lives, therefore, no matter how dreary and uneventful our days may seem from without, it is of immense importance to us to get this hearty spirit and strong resolve to carry on. Always we must hope to strengthen our weaknesses, must survey our enemies bravely and count up our chances of prevailing over them. We must always wind up every self-examination, however discouraging, by a still stronger resolution to carry on. It is inconceivable how important is perseverance to the utmost if we would get success from any struggle. Our one great enemy in our conflicts is discouragement and the will to cease fighting. If only we are brave enough to carry on we

may be confident of ultimate victory, however far postponed. We may apply this principle to nearly every activity of our lives, but particularly is it true in the great battle for heaven, where God Himself is our ally. We must never grow discouraged nor stop trying when we are fighting for God!

Yes, in the spiritual life, though many of us do not realize it, the great enemy to progress and ultimate success in holiness is discouragement. More to be dreaded than our faults and weaknesses, more deadly in the long run than almost any evil inclination we possess, is discouragement, which dissuades us from being brave in the struggle and willing to carry on.

Our faults and weaknesses are allowed in us by Almighty God to be fought with and corrected, that in the correction we may gain merit and prove our good will; and it is entirely certain that if we use the necessary diligence and keep on trying to improve ourselves we shall succeed in the measure that God wills. The worst faults will yield to persevering effort. The most pitiful weaknesses can be corrected with the help of

the grace of God and the power of the sacraments. The one thing that keeps us at low level in the spiritual life, that prevents us from winning manfully to the heights, is discouragement in one form or another and the lack of a sturdy resolution to carry on. One sees this in so many different instances. With some, it is their own faults and shortcomings which discourage them. They could bear a great deal of exterior opposition, could even go through severe temptations and sustain hard labors, but as they go on in life and become aware of the deep-rooted faults of their own character they grow more and more despondent and end by giving up the struggle for higher things.

Now one must admit that it is a rather appalling experience to be brought face to face with oneself. One of the saints, who was vouchsafed a vision of her own soul as God saw it, was so horrified by the sight that she asked for any other suffering rather than be compelled to see her true self again. Yet her shortcomings were undoubtedly far less than ours. So that when men and women have struggled a long time against

ingrained faults in their character and have perceived how wretched they still are, and how little they succeed in wearing away these stony obstacles to perfection, even by the efforts of long years, they begin to grow disheartened and lose courage to carry on.

The cure for this discouragement is the proper realization of God's will in our regard. If God had intended us to be angels He would have made us so, but, in point of fact, He allows us to become subject to shortcomings of character and disposition because He wishes our perfection and our merit to consist not in being perfect from the start, but in gradually and painfully fighting our way to perfection. Thus it is God's own will that we should bravely carry on, and He counts not so much the victories as the perseverance, not so much our success in getting rid of every trace of imperfection as the splendid and dogged persistence with which we still continue to attack these deep-seated faults of our mind and heart, although we have been unsuccessful a thousand times before in getting rid of them. No one, therefore, can prudently despond be-

cause of his or her defects of character or disposition. Our faults are sometimes born with us, and, as St. Francis de Sales shrewdly remarked, we get rid of a good many of them only a quarter of an hour before we die. It is the struggle that counts, not always the victory. It is the bravery to carry on in the face of all discouragement and failure that will bring us at last to the height of glory where God wishes us to be.

There are others who lack the courage to carry on in the face of exterior difficulties. They are impulsive and bold in the beginning of enterprises, but as soon as great difficulties arise their ardor chills and their courage fails. They have not that solid and well-wearing bravery that can carry on in the trenches through long nights of watching and many days of weariness. They would do well for one swift dash over the top to death or victory, but wars are won not by sudden dashes so much as by a brave and patient endurance. Those who cannot carry on against exterior discouragement will never win.

It is comforting to observe from the ex-

perience of history that all that is generally needed for ultimate victory is the calm persistent courage to carry on. The lives of men and of nations abound in wonderful instances of victories won through sheer perseverance, the dogged determination to go on, the unwavering tenacity that clings to one purpose in the face of a thousand discouragements. Those who have such a power to carry on in spite of all obstacles are irresistible. They can maintain one line of action for years upon years without seeing any success. They may grow weary at times and leave off for a while, but they return to the charge with new courage and carry on in the face of anything. After a while everything yields to them. Those who at first oppose become weary of the struggle and give way to so much energy for good. Their own interior weakness, which does from time to time distract and hinder them, cannot hold out against their inveterate perseverance. The untoward circumstances and exterior obstacles, which at first baffled and deterred them, are gradually left behind or broken through.

Those who win victories by dint of very much perseverance have a credit and honor altogether lacking to the brilliant but momentary achievements of a flashy and sudden courage. There is a glory in persevering in a good cause, in bearing the humdrum weariness of desolate days, in coming back to our effort with aching muscles and weary heart after a hundred failures, in changing our plans without abandoning them, so as to fit them to the altering circumstances of the work, in keeping a high purpose clear and strong through all the petty, disagreeable details that are the painful steps toward success. Such splendid persistence has a beauty and a merit all its own.

One may apply these reflections to almost every line of creditable effort. In the spiritual life how strikingly true it is that perfection is won only at the price of an indomitable resolution to carry on! One sees the saints, sometimes weak and imperfect to a degree in their young years, filled with a great, unwearied purpose to carry on their war against the world and the flesh and the devil until they become like Christ.

Through years of effort, through agonies of desire, through crucifixion of the flesh and torments of the spirit, they carry on until at the end of their life comes a calm and a peace like that of heaven and they have won victory because they had the courage, with God's grace, which He eventually always furnishes, to carry on.

One's success is usually measured at last by one's courage and perseverance. There comes a period in every enterprise when the first enthusiasm falters, when obstacles thicken, friends desert one and the way toward success, that was swift and easy, becomes dull and hard. Then it is that one must have the courage to carry on. The darkness is not long. The rough way does not stretch interminably. There is a turn in the path near at hand. But one must work through darkness, carry on through discouragement, stagger along beneath the weight until that turn is reached and success opens up before one. How many a good enterprise is ruined, how many a hopeful plan comes to nothing because in that time of darkness and trouble those on whom the

burden of the work rested have not had the strength and courage to carry on!

Let us keep this phrase in our hearts, therefore, and use it in dark moments to spur our lagging heart to courage. Those men and women in Europe, in the agony of weariness, the pain of effort, the dreadful crucifixion of body and soul which the war brought them in greater and greater measure, cheered one another and heartened themselves by calling out across the conflict, "Carry on." Let us, whose difficulties are much less agonizing, whose troubles are so pale in comparison to their red anguish, show at least a similar constancy and valor in the wars of the spirit, in the weariness of good works, in the troubles and darkness that beset our Catholic enterprises. Let us also take courage, and cry out cheerfully to ourselves and one another for the sake of God and of the Church and of our own soul, "Carry on."

THEIR CONSEQUENCES

One of the singular illusions of life is the seeming inconsequence of human actions. We appear to make so little impression on the scheme of things. Our deeds are so trifling in their doing; and when they are done the universe seems so little changed. The scientists tell us that in the material world whenever we walk across the floor, however softly, or stir ever so little where we stand, the thrill of our motion reaches in time the farthest star. It may be so indeed, but what does so small an influence matter? We might exert all our puny strength and try to the utmost of our power and the most delicate instruments of precision could never detect our influence upon that far-off orb.

We are tempted to think that it is the same with the influence of our moral actions upon the universe. Theoretically, of course, we know that no deliberate and wilful act of ours is without its influence on the whole moral universe and that even the slightest of voluntary deeds has an eternal and far-

reaching significance. But this is one of the many things that we believe without realizing; and though we should not think of denying the truth of the statement that our slightest moral act will endure in its consequences forever, still the fact has all too little influence on our daily and casual conduct. There are too many of our daily actions that are fraught with appalling and tremendous consequences for all eternity, but to whose influence on the whole scheme of things we attend as little as we do to the fact that our footsteps jar the stars.

This is an immense pity. How much we lose of merit and of progress in the spiritual life because of this want of realization! For in reality it is these seemingly slight and inconsequential deeds of ours that build up our merit in time and our glory in eternity. If we would understand truly the effects of our actions we must endeavor to see the universe as God sees it, and in His eyes the moral weight of even the least of our deliberate and wilful actions outweighs all the physical energy of the universe and is more important than all the orbits of the stars.

Few things are more impressive to one who thinks carefully and duly about the truths revealed to us in the Scriptures and ponders God's words and judgments there set forth, than the light and casual way in which temporal misfortunes or achievements are spoken of in the Inspired Word, and the immense importance that is attached even to the smallest—to our way of thinking—of moral goods or evils. We, from our narrow and temporal point of view, may even have felt tempted at times to think that God was insensible, according to our way of speaking, to the sufferings, the physical miseries and death of men. To emphasize the horror of David's sin of vanity in numbering his people—a fault which seems to us to have been, as we should say, "only" a venial sin—God does not hesitate to wipe out by pestilence a vast number of the Jewish nation, inflicting sudden death on thousands, out of hatred for the venial sin of a single man. Again, when there was danger lest the original inhabitants of the land might corrupt the Jews, too prone already to idolatry, God commanded His chosen people to eradicate utterly every soul

of the original inhabitants, laying on them a strict commandment, binding under pain of grievous sin, to slay not only the men, the women and children, but to kill the very cattle and burn the garments and the utensils of these idolaters, so that no taint of paganism might pass from them to His people.

One might multiply similar instances of the vast and unmistakable signs which God has given in many places of the Old Testament that He holds the slightest wilful act of man, whether for good or for evil, of immense consequence, and that rather than commit the slightest sin it would be preferable to endure the greatest physical evil. We see Moses, for a passing sin of doubt when God commanded him to strike the rock and give water to his people in the desert, barred from that supreme desire of his life, to lead his people into the promised land, and destined to die in the desert—he whose simple prayer had obtained the remission of God's punishment upon others for much greater offenses. When the youths who accompanied the ark, moved by a mis-

taken zeal, wishing to save it from overturning, dared to put their hands on that sacred object which none but the priests were privileged to touch, the anger of God smote them dead, though we may well suppose that their moral guilt was but slight and they had no time to deliberate or delay.

One realizes faintly at least, in reading these things, that our slightest deliberate action has a significance so immense that no physical good or evil can express it. And if the vast efficacy of our actions for evil appalls us—as it is shown in the Old Testament, which is the Law of Fear—the immense power of our meritorious actions for good is no less strikingly and much more consolingly shown in the New Testament, which contains the Law of Love. We find St. Paul declaring that the sufferings of this life bear no proportion to the joys which are to come. Our Lord assures us that even a cup of cold water given in His name shall have its eternal reward, and what might seem to us the slight good deed of the penitent thief on the cross, giving to the service and honor of God the last agonized moments

of a life spent in crime, is rewarded by Our Lord in that solemn time with the promise, "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

The truth is that to Almighty God, who sees things as they are, all physical evil is in reality not evil at all in itself, because it has to do only with time, and has no influence, in itself, on eternity. To Him all things are momentous and precious, so far as they make for the great end for which He created the universe and toward which His divine providence is directing constantly all human events until the end of the world—to wit, His own glory and our everlasting salvation. Whatever helps on even a single human soul one step further toward heaven is of unspeakable value in His eyes, while in the physical order are simply of no account whatever save in so far as they minister to the salvation of souls. If we could see things as they are—that is to say, as God sees them—we should take the same view of the universe. The passing good things and sufferings of this life would seem to us as simply of no account at all save in so far as

they helped or hindered us on our way to heaven, and one act of the love of God, one bit of self-denial for His love would seem more precious to us than all the physical well-being, comfort, wealth, and satisfaction in the world.

Of course, one reason why we are inclined by nature itself to make so much of physical well-being, and why we find it so hard to realize the moral consequence of our acts, is that we are bound up so intimately with material and passing goods and know so little about spiritual things, are so caught up and tangled with the things of time and so removed from the great realities of eternity. All that we see or hear, all that comes directly under the notice of our senses, is of the earth earthy, the world of matter and not of spirit. In order to come at the knowledge of spiritual things we have to depend on the aid of reason, with its laborious processes, and of faith, with its difficult and hard-to-be-realized conclusions. It is only by conscious effort, working against our natural inclinations and aided by the strong grace of God, that we can manage to rise

above the natural cravings of our body and the passions of our nature and realize and aspire to the good things of eternity.

It is for this reason, because physical evils and physical enjoyments touch us so nearly and are experienced so directly, that we crave for them by so strong an impulse of our nature; and because spiritual things seem so remote and are not touched by our senses, nor enjoyed by our souls and bodies in this state of exile, it is hard for us to value them as they deserve. We find it difficult indeed to give up the present and material goods we know, and aspire to the eternal and spiritual goods we have never experienced. Therefore it is necessary to strengthen our faith by meditation and prayer, to correct our illusions by pleading for God's grace to see as He does, by trying to realize the influence of our present actions upon the life to come, and to prize even the slightest merit for eternity above all the good things of this world.

Another very constant, potent influence that makes us forget the eternal consequences of our acts and attend only to their effects

in time is the current attitude of the world. The world in its judgments, principles, motives, is natural and earthy. Even when its votaries receive theoretically the doctrines of Christ, practically they take care to enjoy and provide for the good things of this world, and give themselves very little trouble as to the next. They simply follow their natural impulses, and these lead them to an amazing disregard for everything but the present, understanding by the present the little space of this life, which presents itself to them not as an island between two eternities, but as a continent or a world, sufficient in itself and a very good place to live in, beyond which they trouble as little about the eternal verities of hell and heaven as they do about the other planets.

Seeing their absolute disregard for anything beyond the present, and hearing their comments on life and conduct, we are influenced by their praises or dispraises, and come, in time, to take something of their attitude, unless we are vigilant and careful to ward off the infection by pious thought and careful prayer. For we must remember

that we too are exposed to the very same delusion that has wrapped them fast in its folds and shut them from the light of eternity. They feel most secure when they are most in danger. They are busy with earthly trifles when they might be making sure of princedom in the eternal kingdom.

It is only by work and prayer that we can get rid of this common delusion about the consequences of our actions, and shake off the torpor of worldliness. We must meditate perseveringly on the true purpose of our life on earth, to serve and love God and to save our souls. We must reflect that the earth is not as it seems, a solid, enduring place of permanent habitation, but a passing place of trial, where all things are important only in so far as they make for a happy eternity. We must strive to realize with all our might the real purpose of all creatures, gifts of God which He intends us to use in so far as they help us toward our goal of His love and service, and strongly to reject when they allure us away from Him and heaven. When we shall have succeeded, and have fixed our values according to the

standards of God, we must be prepared to be considered and esteemed as fools by many of the world, who utterly fail to understand how anyone can misprize the perfectly evident and desirable goods of this world, and shape all their ambitions and desires toward a future existence concerning which we can be sure only by the—to them—ambiguous and doubtful testimony of Revelation.

Their very criticism should give us a new determination not to fall again into their delusion but to fight manfully to keep the wisdom of eternity. The very terms of their criticism will help to show us the way to persevere. If they question the sureness of our faith, we know that it is most secure. It is by faith alone that we know the true significance of our actions and their consequence in the life to come. By deepening and strengthening our faith, therefore, by prayer, by thought, by practical fidelity to its teachings, we shall best learn to weigh the true and final consequences of our deeds, to despise the mere temporary reward of our acts on earth and to look to and prize only their eternal reward in heaven.

THE SAVAGE HURT OF SILENCE

In an address made during the stirring activities of war time, to the directors of the division of advertising of the Committee on Public Information, Mr. Charles Schwab, of the Shipping Board, made some remarks that are memorable in their application not alone to the building of ships or the winning of wars. "There is one thing I do want to say," he declared, "and I am glad to have the opportunity to say it. It has been a lifelong theory of mine, one that I have put into practice for thirty-five or forty years of industrial pursuits rather successfully, and one which I think ought to be the keynote of everything we strive to do during the period when we wish everybody's greatest endeavors —I am a believer in the fact that men reach their greatest accomplishments by proper encouragement, not by criticism. I have yet to see the man, however great and exalted his situation, who is not susceptible to the approval of his fellow men. And the sever-

est criticism that can come to any man is not to find fault with him, but not to notice him at all. When a man is not noticed he knows that he has not gained the approval of his fellows; but when he is approved he gives his best effort."

There is profound knowledge of human nature in the last part of this very wise observation. The severest criticism is silence; and silence, when heartfelt praise and appreciation may be expected of us, is likewise the most effective discouragement. How many of us realize, or even think at all of, the savage hurt we sometimes inflict on good enterprises, merely by keeping silence?

Encouragement is a necessity for most men and women if they are to persevere in a good work. Most of us are naturally diffident of our own powers, no matter how brave a face we may put on before the world. This is particularly true of the young and inexperienced, whose powers are untested and whose capabilities are unexplored. They wonder and hesitate when called on for any special effort or asked to assume a responsibility. Have they the necessary

talent, and will they be able to do the thing properly, or will they have to bear the shame of failure and the silent pity or open criticism of others? Even when they do make the attempt and gain some fair measure of success in the work—whether it be intellectual effort, such as speaking or writing, or charitable endeavor, or Catholic organization of one sort or another—they depend very greatly for perseverance and courage on the outspoken approval of others. It is natural for the young and untried to lean on the opinion of those around them. They have no perspective to judge of their own capabilities. They listen eagerly for the comments, encouragement, praise even, of their associates and their elders, so as to discover themselves. So, a word said to them in season will be astonishingly effective to encourage them to further efforts.

The hardest thing they can encounter is silence. They have worked hard, planned carefully, and those from whom they have a right to expect a word of comment, some sign of interest if not of approval, say nothing! To them their achievement looms

large and important, something that should have notice at least, if not praise. They are astonished, then appalled, by the silence. Nothing is said. Then those around them must either be utterly without interest in what they are doing, or else they disapprove it, and are too charitable to do aught but keep silence. This is the conclusion that the beginner is apt to draw when he comes glowing from some successful work and meets, not comment, nor criticism even, which might be helpful and would at least be interesting and a sign of interest, but merely silence.

One must not expect young folks to be aware enough of the ways of the world acutely to perceive that it is neither lack of interest nor disapproval which makes others silent who should encourage and approve them, but sometimes thoughtlessness, sometimes pre-occupation, sometimes forgetfulness, and so on through the long list of the causes of our sad omissions and commissions. For them the blue has gone out of the sky and the savor from the earth, because no one seems to share in their joy of achieve-

ment. It is one of the secret tragedies of life, in this queer world, how many young men and women, gifted, capable, and earnest, quietly give up their aspirations, despair of accomplishing the great things whereof they feel the capacity within them, and settle down to a humdrum mediocrity (ugly words!) because they cannot bear—silence.

They are neither cowards nor egotists these who surrender to silence. They could stand up against adverse criticism, could fight opposition and persevere against great and crushing difficulties. The one thing they cannot bear is the entire silence of those from whom they expected human encouragement and the easy word that speaks an inner interest and appreciation. They did not require praise. They did not depend upon the approval of others as the motive of their work, nor do what they were trying to do for the sake of the applause of men. But they were honestly uncertain as to whether they had the talents, the capacity, the fitness for the thing they were beginning. Criticism would have set them right. Opposition would have strengthened them.

But silence gave them simply to understand that they were disregarded. No one was interested enough in them, it seemed, to say anything at all, good or bad, about what they were doing. It was clear to them that such a silence was the extreme of disapprobation. They were profoundly tempted to discouragement because no one cared—and they surrendered!

With more mature men and women it is pretty much the same, though perhaps for somewhat different reasons. Nothing is so chilling, so discouraging for them as simple silence. They take it, as the passage from which we have quoted asserts, as the severest criticism. It is only very few of the workers, the men and women who achieve and plan, who can get on quite independently of some comment, encouragement or at least notice from others. The very resolute who have found themselves and know their own capabilities may be independent of it, though even they grow bewildered and begin to doubt whether what they are doing is worth while if they receive no sign at all of interest or approval from others. But the average

run of persons, no matter how expert they may be, need the stimulus and encouragement of others, and shrivel at the chilling touch of silence.

We ourselves have probably never appreciated how much we depend on the cheer and incitement, which come from the numerous small signs of others' approbation. Our hearts grow accustomed to these humble kindnesses and consequently forget them, but we should be appalled by the sudden silence if the little signs of the interest and support of others were withdrawn from us. The case is quite similar to that of the small cheerful sounds that all day long, unconsciously to us, please and tickle our half-attentive ears. The air is pleasantly full of rushing, singing, tinkling, murmurous undertones which bring to us the thrill of companionable life. Listen a moment and you shall hear them. We neither prize nor regard this lowly music. But, if it were suddenly cut off from us a great loneliness and sadness would possess our soul. Travelers in the North say that worse than the fierce cold is the silence. Solitary confinement is the most

terrible of punishments and, long continued, the silence and the loneliness often unhinge the mind and drive the victim mad. Man is not made to be alone. We need the touch of a brother's hand, the sound of another's voice.

It would be well, after these reflections, to examine ourselves and discover how far we are habitually guilty (the word is not too strong) of inflicting on others, who depend on us for encouragement, the savage hurt of silence. No matter how hidden and obscure our path in the world, we are each one the center of a little group who in some measure depend on us for the pleasant, helpful stimulus of interest and countenance. If we, out of thoughtlessness or with deliberate intent, refuse them the word of appreciation in season, the cordial remark, or cheery comment that tells them that their efforts at good are appreciated and that we are with them in their worthy deeds, we are hurting them. They themselves do not know how much they depend on us. They cannot analyze perhaps why they feel discouraged, why the joy has gone out of their efforts. But the

reason of their discouragement is the unconscious want of appreciation and sympathy which they themselves, by a strange twist of our human nature, may at the same time be withholding from others in equal need of it. You can very easily see, and will readily admit, how useful it is for others to encourage you. Try to realize that they also need your words of kindly cheer.

Those who appear least dependent on this considerate kindness of notice and appreciation are sometimes hurt for lack of it. The mother of the family patiently assumes the offices of general drudge, sacrifices herself for everyone, is always ready to assume everyone's burdens, until she is allowed by common consent to take the fag-end of everything, and no one thinks of thanking her for what has become so customary and obvious. She grows tired in soul, perhaps, and begins to feel and to look worn and old. It is a sort of cruelty in her children not to give her those little marks of affection, which are all the reward she looks for on earth for all her sacrifices but without which her heart faints and pines. And so, too, with the

father of the household. His steady work for his family comes also at times to be taken too much for granted. He needs to be told, sometimes at least, by a look or a smile, that his little flock appreciates him.

One might in a similar way run through nearly all human relations and point out in each the need of signs of interest and approval. The loftiest of mortal stations are not exempt from the need of encouragement. The great in every line of good endeavor, even the Pope in his unequalled eminence, need sometimes to be heartened by approval, as well as the inexperienced and the young. True, the best and most solid encouragement comes to the good from heaven, but Providence wishes us also to help and cheer one another. There is a little sunshine in our keeping which, unless we give it forth, our neighbors needs must miss. Let us be prodigal of kindness. Let us dread to inflict on others the savage hurt of silence and rather err, if exceed we must, on the side of too much encouragement (can there be such a thing?) than keep an ungracious silence toward those whom we might some-

how praise. We should distrust our own heart, and sternly correct it if we are much inclined to practice toward the good deeds of others a sullen silence.

ON LOSING TIME

One sometimes meets people who seem almost obsessed by the fear of losing time. Their days and hours and minutes are measured out with meticulous accuracy. They have systems and methods of saving time that are little short of marvelous, and every moment of their day is meted out and kept track of and accounted for with a diligence that would drive ordinary mortals mad. Well, after all, it is an amiable eccentricity and only going a little too far in a right direction. Surely, within reason, we should wish to make every moment tell, because in our short lives we have so few of them. The sand-glass is now entirely out of fashion, and that is a pity, because it was a very significant piece of furniture. To see the grains go dwindling away through the waist of the hour-glass reminded those of old, rather sharply, of the maxim that was so popular with medieval clockmakers, who used to paint it on the ponderous timepieces they manufactured: *Pereunt et im-*

putantur, "The moments perish and are written down against us."

But truly, what is the honest test of whether we are losing time or making good use of it? Not the mere cutting it up into systematic intervals or hopping briskly to another task at the stroke of the clock—though that may be a sign that this other true test is with us—not being very busy or doing a number of things, nor even having a very great deal to show in the way of accomplishment for each day and hour. None of these things is the ultimate test of whether we are losing or saving time, because we may possess them all and still be wasting our time most woefully. The true test of whether or not we are making good use of our time is this: Are we using it for the love of God and to gain the kingdom of heaven?

The great business of our life, as the little catechism can tell us, is to love God and serve Him, and by so doing to save our souls. The one essential occupation for us is to store up merit for eternity. "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" is a

question of absolutely universal application. In its last meaning it may be applied to every instant of a man's life. What does it profit a man to gain from this present moment all that it can offer for this world, if he lose it for the kingdom of heaven? What shall a man take in exchange for the profit that every moment of his deliberate life can bring to his own soul?

Time is given us to use for the love and service of God. We may, and indeed we must, use it at the same time for many other things, but with the ultimate motive of loving and serving God. In proportion as the love and service of God is the last object of our will, the motive to which all other motives in our actions are subordinate, in that exact proportion we are saving time for eternity. In proportion as we neglect this directing of our actions toward their last end we are losing time, and most irrevocably. Every instant is meant to carry us just so much farther forward toward God, just so much higher in heaven. It depends on our own free choice whether each moment as it comes achieves for us the task that God

has given it. No single scrap of time ever comes back to repeat its offer or renew its opportunity. According as we use the moments as they fly we shall have fruit or failure of them for all eternity.

This reflection gives time, so fleeting in itself, an immense importance and value. One comes sometimes, in the ancient strata of that stone which is the hardened ooze of pre-historic seas, upon ripple marks made by the fleeting undulations of the water on that soft shore immeasurably long ago. The dimpling waves ran up in an instant and died away forever. But as they passed over the sand they made tiny hills and hollows, which slowly hardened, crusted and compacted until they have long outlasted the very sea which threw the ripples to the shore. Here is a faint symbol of the traces that each slight ripple, every fleeting moment of swift time leaves on eternity. The instant passes, but it writes its merit or demerit on our soul, and we shall be the better or the worse for it, nearer to God or less glorious in His sight, for all eternity.

There is, moreover, an inevitableness in

the flight of time that makes its right use still more momentous. The moments never wait, delay or falter. Each one comes swiftly, offers its opportunity and runs away, and we shall never see it more until it confronts us at the judgment. The instants that follow may redeem, they never can recall, the ones that went before.

Life, which to our memory presents itself as a solid whole, is in fact a tapestry made of many stitches, a mosaic of many stones. We are constantly and irrevocably coloring the moments as they pass, and with these infinitesimal threads of time we weave the whole fabric of life and of eternity. One never uses more than a moment at a time. It is the use of moments only that determines our destiny, here and hereafter. How exceedingly important to use time properly. It is our one precious possession, the one coin that we can pay out for eternal glory.

It is crucially important for us, then, quite clearly to realize in what the right use or the loss of time consists. We know that there is such a thing as busy idleness, as being occupied with useless trifles. To

use time well it is not enough merely to be very busy, to have a great deal to do, to keep in a rush of occupations. It is as much a loss of time to use it wrongly or foolishly as merely to idle it away. In order to use time to the best advantage one must know very clearly just what time is meant to be used for, and what is the best employment one can find for it.

Fortunately the whole matter is made very simple. If we were required to find out the most profitable use for every moment, to calculate and plan what it were best for us to do with each hour of our lives, the task would be an intolerable one. But the whole question of our use of time is most simply answered, because the whole purpose of our lives is so evident, definite, and certain. We are made to know, love and serve God, and in so doing to save our souls. In so far, therefore, as we use time to forward this great business of ours on earth we use it well. Whatever time is not spent in the service of God is lost, and lost irrevocably.

To begin with, the time spent in sinning is worse than lost. By sin we turn away

from our supreme Good and bar ourselves from His presence—utterly by mortal sin, unless by His mercy we are forgiven, and temporarily by venial sin, until we have been cleansed by penance or by the fires of purgatory. So that of all outrageous follies, of all atrocious losses of time, sin is the chief. Indeed, sin is the one extreme folly in the world, as it is also the one unmitigated evil. When we sin, preferring some passing gratification to the will of God and to the merit that should be ours for all eternity, we waste time in a way to make the angels weep.

Moreover, and the full pathos of this statement will not dawn upon us until Judgment Day, the time spent in the state of mortal sin is lost time for eternity. For those in mortal sin are enemies of God and cannot merit in His sight the least bit of glory in heaven. So that if a man remained in the state of mortal sin for a lifetime and by God's extreme mercy repented and was saved at last, he would enter into heaven with no more merit for all the sufferings and efforts of his long life than if he had never lived those weary years. What an agony

such a one must suffer in purgatory, realizing and bemoaning that unutterable loss of precious time that might have set him far up among the choirs of the blessed. How strange that men full of worldly prudence and wisdom will sometimes thus deliberately waste almost an entire lifetime!

To turn to the brighter side of the picture, we use time well and save it for eternity when we live in the love and grace of God. The motive of our heart, more than the outward body of our actions, determines the merit of our days before God. Therefore, to use time excellently well we must urge ourselves to a greater and deeper love of Him, a stronger and purer purpose to serve Him, a greater fidelity to His will and courage in denying ourselves all things that may lead us to offend Him. God looks not to the gift of the lover but to the love of the giver. It is not so much in multiplying outward occupations, in accomplishing many things, that we save time for eternity, though if we love much we shall also labor much for God, but by doing always what we think is the will of God, and doing it

for His love. That is the simple secret of using well all the time He gives. Life, which seems sometimes so complicated a problem, so insoluble a riddle, so vexing a maze of duties and responsibilities, is really wonderfully simple. All we need attend to is to do God's will as we see it at this present moment, and from the motive of as pure a love of God as we can achieve. This is the simple formula for spending perfect days.

If we fix and root this realization deep in our mind and soul and then turn and look at life again, we shall find perhaps that the looks of things have wonderfully changed. Men and women who might have seemed to us to be wasting time, if we judged by the standards of the world, are now seen to be acting with heavenly prudence and wisdom. Yonder woman who has given up the world, which offered her very much even in opportunities of service and merit, for a life in the cloister, may seem to worldly folk to be wasting sadly her precious years. When she might have been adorning society, she lives in retirement and prayer. Where

she might have been occupied with showy activities, she gives herself to the obscure work of teaching children or ministering to the sick and the poor. What a sad waste of time in the eyes of those who have no faith! Yet, we who believe are sure that such a one loses her life only to save it, and that every moment of her quiet days is great in glory for eternity. So too with all other uses of our time which make it count for God and for heaven. To use time thus is to save it, while to employ our days otherwise than in the love and service of God and of our neighbor is always a sad and pitiable loss. The moments which we spend doing our own sweet will merely, forgetful of our responsibility toward others, neglectful of God's will and love and thoughtless of our duty, are moments that we shall regret in purgatory. But the days we employ in working for God and out of love of Him, whether we spend them in needful recreation or in effort, whether they are employed in great things or small, whether they pass by pleasantly or are full of struggles and sorrow, those are the days that shall come back

to bless us on the great day of accounting.

It will be a precious fruit of these brief reflections if they give us some sense of the immense importance, of the unthinkable preciousness of time. If we fritter away our time on earth, the precious stuff our life is made of, we are muddling away the golden chances of eternity. We shall, each of us, gain for all eternity—when by God's mercy we shall have died in His friendship—a definite degree of glory in heaven. We can make our eternal glory greater or less, and we do so constantly by the use we make of time.

As we use our time, so we prepare our eternity.

DESPITE OUR IMPERFECTIONS

It is the lot of us mortals to be imperfect, and therefore even in our best works there usually lurk some defects. Strive as we may, there remain in us faults and evil inclinations which will plague us more or less as long as we are alive. Of only two human beings in history is it told that they were without sin. One was the incarnate God and the other His Blessed Mother. The one, being God Himself, could have no part in sin and imperfection. The other, being His true Mother, was preserved by special privilege from any, even indeliberate sins. But the rest of Adam's race, no matter to what point of sanctity they have climbed aided by the helping hand of God, have had from time to time to confess to sins and imperfections. Even in the midst of their most heroic achievements for the love of God they have bewailed their shortcomings and imperfections, and while the world was in admiration at their holiness, they themselves were aghast at the spectacle of their own defects.

It is no wonder, then, that we do even our best deeds with some imperfection. If the saints themselves, those geniuses of the supernatural life, who lived on peaks of sanctity to which our faltering footsteps never shall approach, were conscious in all they did of haunting imperfections, how can we in our littleness expect to be exempt from shortcomings even in our holiest works? It is a condition of our fallen human nature to be imperfect, and imperfect we shall remain, in a greater or less degree in proportion to our struggles for perfection, even to the end of the chapter. This is a melancholy result of the Fall, this proneness of ours to manifold imperfections, yet it must not be an occasion of discouragement. As St. Francis de Sales reminds us, if God wished us to be angels, He would have made us so. As it is, we must be content to be good men and women.

Besides, as the saints have so often pointed out, our imperfections are an occasion of precious humiliation. They let us see what we really are and put us in our right place. They make clear to us our dependence on

God, without whose aid we should fall into much worse disorders. In a word our imperfections offer invaluable opportunities for the practice of patience, self-contempt, and entire dependence on Almighty God. Being what we are, we need continued humiliations to keep us in our proper place. From the beginning pride has been the most perilous temptation for the creature. "By that sin fell the angels, how can man, then, the image of his Maker, hope to win by it?"

Yet it is an unhappy fact that even those who are sincerely bent on serving God and who earnestly desire holiness are discouraged and deterred from earnest and continued effort by the sense they have of their own imperfections. Instead of considering that their lowliness is a ladder whereby they can climb much nearer God, they are rather discouraged at finding themselves so full of imperfections and with a silly pride refuse to go forward at all because they must go limping or crawling for the want of wings.

But worst of all, perhaps, is the discouragement to goodly effort which many earnest souls find in their imperfections. They

question anxiously whether it is not better to refrain from certain good works altogether rather than perform them with so much imperfection. To see the strain of self-love and self-seeking which runs like a tarnished tinsel thread through the gold warp and woof of their soul's weaving when they give themselves to exterior good works, makes them question whether it would not be better to omit the good works altogether, rather than offer God such a mingled texture. They are tempted to leave off trying altogether when they begin to perceive how mixed their motives are, and how human and earthly reasons insinuate themselves betwixt the golden stuff of their work for God.

How little such folk know of human nature as it is, and how poorly they understand the customary way in which God leads to sanctity! "No one becomes suddenly either very good or very wicked," says an ancient maxim of the saints. Little by little one must increase in goodness. If, then, we refuse to perform these good works which, as we see, we can only do with imperfection, the consequence will be that we shall find

ourselves performing no more good works at all. Indeed, to be conscious that our best works are very imperfect and that even when we have done all that we can we must still say, "I am an unprofitable servant," is in itself a virtue. Were we to think our good works without defect, we should most certainly be sadly mistaken and prove ourselves wofully lacking in the virtues of self-knowledge and discretion.

It was St. Francis de Sales again who said: "It is better to do a good work with imperfection than not to do it at all." A very obvious-seeming saying, yet how many there are who need that encouragement and caution. For in the limbo of good intentions unfulfilled and good works unperformed how many a golden deed is lying which might have been carried on to the heaven of fulfillment had not some fear of imperfection withheld us from trying and chilled our resolution. The grace, the power and the opportunity all came together. The good deed was ready at our hand. Perhaps we never quite knew what it was that withheld us just when all things conspired to urge us

forward to a noble work. That chilling shade of discouragement, which made our resolution falter, fell from the sudden sense of our own imperfection and the certainty we felt that somewhere along the way of that good deed we should commit some fault and spoil, in some degree, the work we wished to offer perfect to the Lord. In such a pass hereafter let us hear the clear mild voice of Francis de Sales, who knew so intimately both this world and heaven. "Go on, my child," he will say, "do not desist for fear of imperfection, but take all precautions and then go boldly forward. Far better to do a good work with imperfection than not to do the good work at all."

Even the saints have been obliged to urge themselves forward with such reflections, lest their imperfections should discourage them from good works. There is that classic instance of St. Bernard, who one time was preaching an eloquent sermon, when on a sudden there came to him a wave of self-approval. He had begun the sermon with the purest of motives, desiring only the glory of God and the salvation of souls. But as

he saw the rapt looks of his hearers, and remarked how they hung on every word of his golden eloquence, his heart began to swell with pride. Then suddenly a deep shame came over him, that in the preaching of the word of God he should take pleasure in his own poor eloquence, and he was tempted to give over preaching and go down from the pulpit, discouraged at his own imperfection. But like a flash it came to him that this discouragement was a temptation of the father of lies, who wished in this way to destroy the good work Bernard was doing. So, in the stillness of his heart, the saint addressed to the evil one a swift rebuke. "I did not begin this work at your bidding," he said, "neither will I leave it off at your bidding." So curbing as he could the imperfection of his heart, he went on preaching the word of God. Thus should we act when we are tempted to leave off a good work for fear of imperfection.

We shall be besieged in various ways by this discouragement which is not of heaven. To some it will come as a distaste for holy actions, because one perceives in them so

much that is faulty and human. The time of meditation and prayer grows burdensome for us because we can never pass it without distraction. The sacraments are less consoling because we have to struggle in our preparation with so many adverse circumstances, obstacles and distractions from within and without us. Dealing with others becomes a cross because we grow more sensible of our manifold imperfection in talk and action. Many a one under such circumstances is tempted to run away from merit and imperfection together and to be rid of defects by shunning the good actions in which they occur.

With others again it is some particular failing, the fear of which dampens their courage and chills their effort. They are overprone to human affection and therefore shun the opportunities of doing good to others for fear they may offend God by forming personal attachments. Others still are conscious of an overweening appetite for praise, and so they flee showy occasions when they might do great good, but when at the same time they would be exposed to yield

somewhat to vanity and the ambition of honor. Others again shrink from good works to which their nature is inclined for fear they might do the works more for human than for heavenly motives. In all such instances, providing always that there is no question of a proximate occasion of deliberate serious sin, one should go ahead with the good deed, taking all precautions against the imperfection one fears, but not being discouraged or deterred from going steadily forward, even when the serpent of imperfection, which we have feared, begins to rear its ugly head in the path of our good work.

We should, indeed, struggle manfully against our imperfections. We should resist from the beginning the pride or selfishness which we have reason to dread. But we should take these precautions in the midst of action. Not by sulking in our tent, afraid to meet the foe, but by going on the open field and taking blows and wounds do we glorify God, whose power is made perfect in our infirmity. When the war is over and all battles ended we need have no fear concerning the wounds we have received in

the fray. The good we do is immortal, and we shall take it in golden store past the gates of heaven. Our faults and imperfections God will mercifully purge away in His cleansing fires. Now we are dross and gold combined. Then we shall be pure and shining gold. Now, for our greater lowliness and trust in Him, God suffers us to groan under manifold imperfections. Then He will give into our hearts for all eternity that measure of glory, heaped up and pressed down and overflowing, which we have merited by our painful efforts, striving to love Him and to help our neighbor, unwearying and undiscouraged despite our imperfections.

THE PRAISE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

In praising the holy Mother of God one might almost say, with due reverence, that the Church on earth has entered into holy rivalry with the Church in heaven. From her beginnings in the earliest cradle of Catholicity, the dark caverns of the catacombs, the Church, by a natural instinct, has striven to honor the Mother of God in every way and with every means that she found at her hand. The devotion of those early ages expressed itself in crude images of the Blessed Virgin, scratched or painted on the walls of the catacombs and in the repetition of her name on the tombs of the saints. When the spouse of Christ came from the darkness of her hiding-place into light and glory she enlisted the utmost powers of her saints and doctors to praise the name of Mary. The Fathers of the Church grow most eloquent on this favorite theme, and one could make a mighty volume, indeed an entire library, of citations from Ephrem of

Syria, Augustine, Jerome, and all the bright company of the doctors of the Church who wrote in honor of the Blessed Virgin.

When a great pomp of ritual and ceremony came into the life of the Church these holy rites were gilded and lit with the name of Mary. The Mass, the supreme and august ceremony of Christendom, is sweetly fragrant with her name. As the Divine Office came to be recited by priests and clerics her praise was woven into its hymns, its antiphons, and lessons, so that all priests and all Religious who say the Office repeat many times each day the sweet name of Mary. When great cathedrals began to blossom like lilies in the soil of Europe, the loveliest spot, after the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, was the Lady Chapel, within which was honored the statue of the Blessed Mother. When Christian art blossomed to its fulness in the glory of the Italian painters, which is the despair and wonder of all following ages, the summit of their achievements were the Madonnas, those most moving and human, yet spiritual and heavenly, visions of the Mother and the Child. In

the cycle of her feasts the Church has likewise studded the year as thick as stars with memories of the Blessed Virgin. In the early days of the Church, when feasts were fewer, it was the great events of the life of Christ, the Nativity, the Circumcision, the Presentation, and all the dolorous remembrances of the Passion which came into the calendar of the Church. In every one of these feasts and solemnities one sees close by the Son the figure of His mother. But as God's providence unfolded itself in the history of the world the glorious interventions of the Divine Power in honor of the Blessed Virgin gave rise to other feasts and solemnities.

The great victory of Lepanto, when Christendom was marvelously delivered by the success of the Christian fleet, was a visible answer to the innumerable prayers which Catholics were offering up to the Blessed Virgin, and the commemoration of this victory gave us the feast of the Most Holy Rosary. The preservation of the great order of Mt. Carmel from the machinations of its enemies, through an apparition of the

Blessed Virgin to Pope Honorius III, who was considering their false charges, when she came to bid him protect her order of Carmel, gave rise to the great feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. The marvels wrought at the House of Loreto put upon the calendar of the Church the feast of our Lady of Loreto. The astonishing miracles at Lourdes brought all the faithful, under the guidance of the Pope, to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. So the calendar of the year now has a succession of lovely memories, each one the commemoration of a mystery in the life of the Blessed Virgin or the grateful remembrance of some favor given to her by God or given in her honor to mankind by the heavenly Mercy. So that at the end of all these centuries a great growth of praise, of marvelous richness, of infinite variety, of fragrant holiness, in legend and art and tradition and history and ceremonies and rites and feasts and prayers and devotions, has grown up about the name of the Most Blessed Virgin. She has become, after her divine Son, the most glorious figure in human history. She is the highest of all mere

creatures in the majesty of her praise and the dignity of her honor among men, as she is unique in her place in God's providence and her unthinkable glory in heaven.

Surely it is a delight to our human nature to have one member of the race of Adam, a mere creature like ourselves, on whom we can shower all praise and yet fall short of speaking the glorious truth. Keeping for God that divine honor which is His alone, and taking care not to use any expression which is unsuitable to the position of a mere creature, one can pour forth the most extraordinary praise and exercise the most profound reverence toward this daughter of our human nature. She is one in God's creation to whom the most exalted titles which man can have, and the most limitless praise which a mere creature can bear, are to be given in their fullness; and she has a whole series of titles, blinding in their heavenly brilliance, which belong to her alone among all the daughters and the sons of Adam.

It is she alone who combines the perfection of virginity with the most sublime mother-

hood. She only has united the utmost eminence with the profoundest humility. She has gathered into her own heart and soul the sanctity of all the choirs of blessed spirits and of all the degrees of the blessed. She is greater than the angels and is their queen. Her faith was more fruitful and deeper than that of the patriarchs. Her knowledge of things divine is more profound than that of the prophets. She was the Mother of the infant Church, and is the Queen of the Apostles. She excels all martyrs in merit of her martyrdom, because, loving her divine Son more than she loves herself, she could suffer more in His suffering than any agony of her own. She has gained more of the crown and glory of the martyrs by bearing to stand by His cross and to die with Him in spirit than would have been hers if she had only given up her own life instead of giving up her divine Son. Of the confessors she is also queen, because her merit is not only the swift and fiery merit of the martyrs, but the merit of patient years spent in obscure ways, living out the faith of Christ and His teachings in perfect imitation of her divine Son; and

she gave a more glorious confession of the faith by the long years she spent on earth than did even the most exalted of those great saints who praise God in heaven among the order of the confessors. She is the Virgin of all virgins, the Queen of Virgins, and the snowy luster of her virginity is enhanced by her glorious motherhood. And of that last division of the blessed in heaven whom we call "all the saints" she is also queen, because she is the patron of the little as well as the great, and her glory in heaven is woven not only of the great jewels of those singular passages in her life when she seemed almost to excel human nature by her sanctity, but likewise of the many small fidelities of hidden days, which, after all, shall make up the crown of the greater part of the elect in heaven.

But besides the glory which God has given to the Blessed Virgin while living on earth, the most real of all the persons of history after her divine Son, He has thrown about her also an ideal glory, so that she is, as it were, lifted out of herself and made a type and figure of humanity, of wisdom, and of

the Church. The most heavenly praise which the Holy Spirit has put into the mouths of the prophets concerning Wisdom is applied by the Church to the Blessed Mother, in the Mass and in the Office, with a most singular appropriateness. As she is the Seat of Wisdom so also she is the personification of mere human wisdom elevated by divine grace, and so what is spoken of wisdom itself by the Holy Spirit is aptly spoken also of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is likewise in her fruitful virginity and maiden motherhood an image of the Church, that virgin mother of souls, that stainless and immortal figure among the nations of the world who, living long on earth, still keeps the perpetual freshness of her heavenly virginity and yet is mother to all the souls of men.

Finally, the Blessed Virgin has been given in her own character the most sublime traits of the greatest of women of the Old Law and of the New. As the prophets and the patriarchs and the heroes of the Old Law were types and figures of Christ and faintly shadowed in their dim dawn the rising Sun of justice, so also, one may say with reverence

and understanding, the greatest figures of the women of the Old Testament were faint hints of the dawn of justice in the Virgin Mary. The mother of the Machabees was not more brave than she who stood at the Cross and offered her divine Son as a sacrifice for the world. Judith was not so fearless, Ruth was not so gentle and dutiful. The fortitude of those grave mothers of the Old Law, the holiness of the virgins, the strength of the great women of old, are renewed and glorified in the character of the Blessed Virgin Mary. All womanhood found in her its most glorious realization, and all sanctity its highest exemplar among mere creatures. It is no wonder, then, being what she is, that the Blessed Virgin has been the inspiration of the greatest art, that she is at the heart of the most fervent devotion, that she is found wherever her Son is found, and is most honored where He is most deeply loved.

Is it not delightful to consider how even our dull human nature has been stirred to so much exalted praise of this most perfect and beloved woman? It was from the lips

of the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God, that the Blessed Virgin heard the first accents of that exalted praise which was to be hers thenceforth: "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" But from that day until now and throughout all the ages the Church has caught up the sweet refrain fallen from heaven and has re-echoed in a million ways "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

OUR PURGATORY

PURGATORY, that place of woes and expiation which, both our faith and reason teach, awaits us all if we leave this life in God's friendship, but with any part of the punishment of our sins unatoned for, is unhappily ours in several true and saddening ways.

To begin with, which one of us can hope, unless we use heroic diligence and constant self-sacrifice and penance, to escape from punishment in that place of cleansing? The justice of God will not be eluded or deceived. Though we may cloak our misdeeds from men and angels and even from our own consciences, God's eye will see and His justice must avenge what still remains to be punished in us when we die.

But purgatory is ours in still another sense. It is the sins of man which have brought this place of punishment to be. Purgatory had no part in the original plan of God's creation. It was made necessary by our sins. Since nothing that is defiled can

enter heaven, and since many of those who die in God's friendship are still stained with sin or with the remains of sin, it is necessary that there should be some place of purging and cleansing for those souls who have deserved heaven but are unready for it. It is, therefore, to give them a refuge where they can be cleansed from their sins that God has created the state of purgatory.

Purgatory, then, is ours because we have made it necessary by our sins. We can call purgatory ours for yet another reason, because we are continually making, sad to say, our own long purgatory. Venial sins seem exceedingly trifling things. The actions by which we commit them are so small and passing. A word or two of deliberate slight detraction, a burst of wilful anger, the careless appropriation of some small property of another—these things are so slight and pass so quickly that they leave very little burden either on our memory or on our conscience. Yet, it is such small things as these, deliberately done in violation of the law of God, that gradually prepare for us the abysmal depths of our purgatory.

St. Paul says that those who commit such sins shall be saved, yet so as by fire; and with a vivid figure he describes the punishment of purgatory by declaring that the straw and chaff must be burned out of our works before we can enter heaven. These little misdeeds of ours, seemingly so small, but very grievous in their punishment in purgatory, are as straw and chaff, seemingly light things in themselves, but kindling a fierce fire. So, purgatory is ours because we are making our purgatory day by day through our wilful sins and our neglect, maybe, to diminish that searching flame by voluntary penance in this world.

It is a saddening thought besides that purgatory is ours for still a third reason—that we are helping in our way to increase the purgatory of those about us. Any bad example or incitement to venial sin which we offer to others does indeed put them in danger of a longer purgatory. We are too likely to overlook the influence of our actions on others. The force of example is almost irresistible, and friends and neighbors are defenseless against our influence. We have a

mighty power over them for good, but we are too likely to overlook our influence for evil. We can scarcely grow angry without their growing angry too; we cannot be pious and devout without inclining them to grow pious and devout. When they see us easy and careless about the rights and property of others, they are inclined to become lax. When they notice that we are prone to envy and detraction, they feel themselves inclined to envy and uncharitableness, too. Therefore, unless we are very circumspect, we are continually increasing, by our bad example, the punishment which they will receive in purgatory. This is a sobering thought, and one which should beget in us very earnest resolutions of avoiding scandal to those about us and teaching them by our example how to escape the punishment of God and to anticipate God's justice by penance.

There is still a fourth sad sense in which purgatory is ours. With dreadful thoughtlessness we leave our friends there. For we have a tremendous power over this place of woe. The Church multiplies her indulgences and constantly exhorts us to pray for the

dead. She tries to make us realize how immense is our power to free the spirits of the just confined in this place of misery and torment. The agony of the suffering souls gets them no merit. For them all merit is past. Their suffering is expiatory and satisfactory; it does not add to their glory in heaven. Therefore, while we might bear the thought of souls suffering here on earth, because their suffering is the way to a glorious crown in heaven, we should find it intolerable to think that we leave our friends to suffer in purgatory, where their agony and longing is not fruitful save that they are being purged and cleansed for heaven. A word or two, an indulgenced ejaculation, a prayer from the heart, a bit of self-denial, a deed of almsgiving and kindness offered for the poor souls, can hasten the deliverance of these prisoners of the Lord, can cool the hot flames of their agony, open the grim doors of their dungeon, and lead them forth to their everlasting enjoyment in heaven. Yet we forget and forget!

These thoughts, though melancholy to a degree, should stir us, not to fruitless griev-

ing, but to energetic activity. There is still time for us to take advantage of our opportunities and of our power over that place of woe. If purgatory is ours through our demerits, our sins and our forgetfulness, we can make it ours in another and glorious sense by our mighty dominion over that place of suffering. If purgatory is ours because we have deserved it through our sins, we may make it our conquest by ridding ourselves in time of our guilt which will drag us to its flames if we die uncleansed.

Such a little effort, such a little care and energy will cleanse us of the punishment of our sins and make our souls ready for heaven so that we may escape the dark flames of purgatory! St. Paul has told us that the delights of heaven are so great that they are out of all comparison to the sufferings of this life. In like manner one may conjecture that the pains of purgatory are so great that they are out of all comparison to the sufferings of this life. It is very much better for us to live a life of the most extreme mortification than to fall into the unmeritorious agony of purgatory.

On the other hand, it does not need so very much penance to free us from this place of woe. The Church offers her indulgences; our every thought and word and action offered for the love of God are immensely powerful to satisfy for our sins. There are many ways of doing penance that will neither injure the health nor hurt the spirit. We can offer up the daily and hourly difficulties of life in atonement for our sins, and with a little care and attention and earnestness, we can conquer purgatory and prepare our souls for a glorious passage from this life straight to the portals of heaven.

Then, too, our power over the purgatory of others is equally inspiring. By remembering to pray for them, by offering up the expiatory value of our thoughts and desires in their behalf, by gaining indulgences, hearing Masses and offering up communions we can deliver whole hosts of souls from pain. If our faith were keener and more vivid, the glorious opportunity of helping others out of purgatory would appeal to us irresistibly.

They are in such terrible torment and we

can free them so easily. Our hearts naturally respond to the piteous appeal of great pain and great suffering when we feel that we can relieve them. One sees so often the general pity and compassion, the almost universal eagerness to help which public calamity stirs up, when, in a neighborhood, a great disaster occurs, a fire, or a flood. How all about drop their own personal affairs and hurry to help the suffering! At a fire, for example, when it is known that there are women and children in the burning house, what unsuspected heroism will suddenly come to light among bystanders! Men willingly risk their lives and go through the flame itself to rescue those who are in danger. All that we need, then, to make us hurry to the rescue of the souls in purgatory is a vivid appreciation of their need and of the power we have to help them.

If these same poor souls, still clad in their mortal bodies, were in terrible danger from fire or were actually in the midst of a conflagration and we could help them by a few prayers, by a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, by some easy ejaculations, what cruel mon-

sters we should be if we did not do the little necessary to save them from great pain!

Now the souls in purgatory are suffering more anguish, if we are to believe the sayings of the saints, than it is possible to suffer in this life. Their pains are excessive, their longing for God is overwhelming. Nothing is between them and the light of heaven but the remainders of their sins. If God's justice is appeased they will go straight into the arms of their Father who is in heaven. In the midst of the greatest misery they are, as it were, just next door to the most exquisite happiness. We can relieve them by indulgenced prayers, by Masses and communions, by all the easy and profitable ways in which the Church recommends us to pray for and help the suffering souls. How weak our faith must be, or how cold our hearts, if we do not do all in our power to help the souls in purgatory!

OTHER PEOPLE

WHAT mysteries we are to one another! How little we sometimes have to go by in judging even our most intimate companions. Yet how pestiferously prone we are to pass sentence and to frame decrees, in our own minds and sometimes in our speech to others, concerning men and women of whom we know for certain almost nothing.

We have an incomparably better opportunity to know ourself than we have to know anyone else in the world. With ourselves, at least, we live with uncovered mind and heart. That very mysterious yet very real and vivid means of knowledge called consciousness is perpetually making us aware of our own thoughts, feelings, impulses, emotions, and of the voluntary choices, decisions, acts of nobleness, or baseness, of resistance or compliance, that make up our human life. No need for us to use the dubious means of conjecture and deduction to find out what we are, what we are willing, planning, think-

ing. The witness of our own thoughts, wishes, decisions and volitions constantly confronts us. One would think that we should all have, of the very inevitable necessity of consciousness, a true and proper knowledge of ourselves.

Yet how rare is true self-knowledge! With all the advantages we enjoy of intimate inspection of our own hearts, of the constant and immediate vision of our own minds and wills, we know so little of our very selves. We are at a loss sometimes to decide whether in this important action or that we have acted well and nobly or from motives base and vile. We are perplexed to decide whether this act or that was good or evil. Nay, sometimes we may even find it in us to doubt whether a whole course of action, deliberately chosen and persevered in for years, was after all right and in accord with principle or from motives unworthy and ignoble. We are mysteries to our own selves.

Even the wise, the great, and the holy have experienced this sad perplexity, this difficulty of accurate and sure self-knowl-

edge. St. Paul, deeply versed in the human heart, cries out that we know not even whether we are worthy of God's love or hatred. In the secret of their souls the saints have wrestled with the awful riddle of their own consciences and owned to God with tears that they were cast utterly on His mercy, for of themselves they knew not whether they were worthy of praise or blame for their deeds. How many penitents, before confession, making that necessary scrutiny of their conscience which is an anticipation for them of the judgment, find themselves unable to determine the measure of guilt of some action with every detail of which memory makes them familiar and which they know, not merely from hearing or seeing, but on the inerrant witness of a consciousness that pierces like light the very abysses of the soul. How difficult is accurate self-knowledge!

If then we find it so hard to know and judge ourselves, though to that knowledge and judgment we have such singular approaches, how shall we be able to know and to judge other people? If, with the subtle

and inerrant witness of our own consciousness to aid us, we find it so difficult and sometimes impossible to estimate the precise color of our actions, how shall we sit in condemnation on the acts of others, concerning which we must depend on means of knowledge that are so dim, uncertain, and delusive? For how do we learn of the motives of other people, which are the hidden springs from which flow the goodness or evil of their acts? From their looks, their words, and their actions. We gaze into others' faces, and from their expression we guess their thoughts. We listen to others' words, and from their tone and their meaning we gauge their emotions and their will. We consider their actions and speculate therefrom what is in their secret hearts. But none of these things truly justify us in passing unkind judgments on another.

Words are of all means of knowledge the surest to learn another's heart. They have a definite meaning, given them by common consent, and they are the ordinary means for the communication of thought. But observe, we have sometimes a habit of reading into

another's words a meaning he never intended, or of trying to conjecture more than it is the purpose of his speech to reveal. An itching curiosity may possess us to pierce deeper into the recesses of his mind and heart than his words light up for us. How many misunderstandings, hard judgments, prejudices, and hates have arisen from falsely interpreting what may have been the very innocent and well-meant remark of another! Now, it is neither our business to guess more than other peoples' words are intended to convey to us, nor is it at all a safe pastime. If we find it so hard to judge ourselves when our heart is open before us, how shall we be safe in guessing, beyond the meaning of his words, the shadowy places of our neighbor's heart?

Yet there are some folk—and we all have a touch of their folly—who are forever taking scandal, not at what another says, but at what they think he means. Innocent remarks have to them a sarcastic tinge. Observations blurted out without any ulterior purpose and on the spur of the moment are, to their ears, fraught with insinuation and the result

of dark premeditation. Where there is no harm in a bit of speech beyond some rashness perhaps or foolishness, they find grounds for serious accusations in their own hearts and perhaps even in their remarks to others. We are sadly responsible for misjudging others from their words, and very foolish. Enough to take the plain meaning of others' words and put aside the futile wish to discern more than they mean to say.

Looks are another means of learning the heart and mind of other people—a much less definite and trusty way than words. For if our ear sometimes colors their voices, much more does our eye tinge and distort what their looks convey. How slow we should be to take scandal or offense from the looks of others, and how we should distrust the silly rash judgments and vain suspicions that flash into the mind because of the manner, air, or aspect of another. Prejudice, vanity, and false sensitiveness—how often they take offense where none in the world was intended, by misreading and misinterpreting the vague and inarticulate language of a look.

But it is in misreading the actions of

others that we are most prone to err in judging of other people; and here therefore we should in reason take the greatest care. In the case of words, one's neighbor has a chance, so to speak, to explain himself. One is responsible for the plain meaning of his words and must be held to answer for them. But how open to misunderstanding and mistake is the language of actions! Now one of the things we expect or at least wish for from others is that our actions shall be interpreted in the most favorable light. It would be intolerable to think that, besides the faults we do actually commit and the unkindnesses we are actually guilty of, those about us are busy reading unintended and sinister meanings into the harmless things we do. It is bad enough that we must answer for the misdeeds we truly perpetrate. It sickens us to think that actions in themselves entirely well meant and good are twisted by this one or that one into occasions of offense. We wish at least to be taken at our actual valuation, and not to be made out worse than we are by having our innocent deeds distorted to evil meanings.

Well but consider, the lenient interpretation that we desire for ourselves we should be, at least, as ready to give to the acts of others. They crave for fairness and justice, not to say mercy and kindness, in the interpretation of their actions just as we do. They have no defense against our bad interpretation. Their actions are, so to speak, at the mercy of our mean interpretation if we choose to misjudge them. Words have a definite meaning, and when they are clear and precise we cannot distort them if we will. But actions may be endlessly misinterpreted. Did not the Scribes and Pharisees of old slander even the flawless and blessed actions of Our Lord and misinterpret His heavenly goodness so as to make out that He was a malefactor?

A very profound test of our own character is the way in which we judge the actions of others. In passing judgments upon them we really, so to speak, pass judgment on ourselves. To take the acts of others in the best possible part, to give them the benefit of the most kindly interpretation, to choose always of two possible constructions of their

intention the more generous and creditable to them, is a certain sign that we are ourselves generous and noble-hearted. While to be always suspicious and perpetually to interpret the acts of others for the worse is a sign of a heart not quite magnanimous and of a disposition not quite charitable, nor even just.

So that really in judging others harshly and interpreting their deeds for the worse it is ourselves that we injure most. But besides we make it much harder for others to be good. Confidence, the evident disposition to take another's actions in the best part, and give him credit for all the good they can be interpreted to mean, is an incentive to well-doing and discouragement to carelessness and wrong. But the lack of confidence in another, a disposition to judge him too severely, is a hindrance to the good that is in him and an occasion of desperate discouragement that may lead to evil deeds.

Let us very persistently and pointedly endeavor, therefore, to think as well as possible of other people and to interpret their looks and words and actions in the best and

kindest spirit. We shall thus be following the Golden Rule; and we shall also, thanks be to God, be keeping more closely to the truth than if we judged harshly. For does not experience show us more and more that much seeming evil is really not quite meant, and that much good hides even under untoward appearances? To think the best of everyone is not only the kindest, it is the safest rule.

TOPSY-TURVY

LIVING in the world, surrounded by men and women whose standards are frankly sordid, material, and natural, and who judge everything by outward appearances and estimate everything by the value it has for present profit and pleasure, one is likely to catch some taint of the prevalent worldliness. More or less unconsciously the good things of this life, property, world success, the possession of talents, brilliant intellectual achievements, position and rank and affluence, tend to grow more and more estimable in our eyes, and we are likely to look with respect and envy on their possessors. Meanwhile the truly solid and enduring things—virtue, the love of God, heavenly charity, grace and merit and sanctity—either escape our consideration altogether or dwindle pitifully in our esteem compared with the flashy and obtrusive trinkets of this Vanity Fair called the world. But the simple truth is that the world and we ourselves, in so far as we agree with its

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artificial standards and judgments, are plainly and simply wrong, and that death and judgment will turn topsy-turvy all the world's carefully considered estimates of worth and values, and show the nothingness of the things wherein it trusted and the unspeakable preciousness of the things it disregarded and despised.

It is hard to realize the truth of this saying, that the world is wrong in esteeming present riches, power, success and that the saints are right in despising all it has to offer and preferring poverty, obscurity, and penance for the love of God. The obvious facts of life seem to be so mercilessly on the side of the world. There before us is the panorama of human life, and we see men and women wearing themselves out in pursuit of present pleasure, riches, money, achievement. The rewards of their exertions are so solid and palpable. They work for money and get it, and it is power in their hands. They make sacrifices for fame and position and achieve them. The rewards of the present life are so very obvious and tangible! They can be touched,

weighed, measured, compared, estimated.

On the other hand, the rewards of supernatural striving seem so distant, vague, impalpable, elusive! Most men would smile when they were told that the rich and the great of this world are in great measure not to be envied, but pitied because they have assumed a dreary load and a painful handicap for heaven. They would laugh to hear that many of these solid citizens, these pillars of society whose judgment is so sound in all questions of policy and business, are mistaken in the one very thing which it most behooves them to know, and are doing the worst possible bit of business when they prefer these tangible goods of earth to the service of God and forget and disregard the hope of heaven.

Yet the truth is, however we dodge it or disregard it, that things have in fact just that value which God sees in them, and no other. To him, the All Holy and All Wise, the pomps and successes of men and what are called sometimes the "substantial rewards of life" are simply of no worth whatever. To Him, in the clear light of His

eternity, all things appear in their own proper value, and nothing is of real or lasting consequence except in so far as it helps or hinders us on the way to heaven. To a man who stands in a valley of the earth the perspective in which he sees his surroundings deceives him as to their relative size unless he is skilled at judging distances. What is near him looms large and distinct, while even a mountain in the distance dwindles to a blur on the horizon. But to the observer in an aeroplane who is flying far above the earth everything takes a truer proportion. The whole world lessens to a chequered map, and, while he sees all the chief features of the landscape, they all appear alike insignificantly small—mere patches on a ball. It is hard for us, being so small ourselves and so close to the earth, to estimate earthly things at their true value; but to God's eternal wisdom all the power and glory of the world are simply nothing —patches on a ball of earth which He has made and will destroy. At judgment-day all mankind will take the viewpoint of God. How they will all despise the trivial things,

the rank and praise and pleasures and pride, of which they now make idols!

But this turning topsy-turvy of the values of the world is, as a matter of fact, not reserved to the day of judgment; it is constantly going on all about us, when the plans of men come counter to the stern reality we call death. It is astonishing how skilfully we elude the teachings of death and blink at its warnings; but, for all our evasions, it turns upside down the values on which the world relies and shows the true nothingness of everything but goodness. Let a man gather to himself the envy of the whole world and seize on every honor and distinction. Put him as high as you will in rank, riches, all that worldly folk desire. Then let him die, and the moment after his soul has left the body see how many there are found, even among the most worldly, who will envy him then or wish to change places with him. The very multitude of his possessions deepens our pity for his parting from them. The grip he took on life and the hold he had on the world make the pathos of his taking off all the greater. The poignancy

of a tragedy depends on the eminence of its hero, and death, final catastrophe as it is in the eyes of the worldlings, seems to them a greater calamity in proportion as the dead man was rich, honored, and high in the esteem of men.

If we could look steadily at the world and see it as it is in the eyes of God many of our estimates and appreciations would be amazingly changed. The rich and the cultured and honorable who make gods of their own desires would seem the most miserable of men, and we should shudder to see how calmly they walk on the brink of a precipice and trifle with damnation. Their riches and honors would seem trifling and fleeting, and the affluence, ease, and pleasure in which they live, a supreme misfortune, because it lulls their wretched souls to security, while they are in fact naked and mean and poor. But our admiration and envy would go out to the lowly servants of God, who are heaping up treasures in heaven. The men and women who have altogether devoted themselves to God's service in religion and are living hard, obscure, and laborious days for

His love would seem to us princes and full of wealth and power, as indeed they are in God's kingdom. The simple and poor, and those who are truly poor in spirit though they may have wealth and honors, too, would shine in our eyes with a brightness that will outlast eternity, because they keep their hearts unsullied from this world.

The humble work of many patient and prayerful mothers and of toiling fathers who are bringing up their families in the love and fear of God would seem to us a more desirable and glorious achievement than all the showy, consequential, self-glorifying deeds of worldlings. What a surprise is in store for those who judge according to the standards of the world, when the day of judgment shall lay bare the hearts of men and bid the whole universe acknowledge that God's ways alone are right and His judgments only are just and true. Then indeed shall the whole scheme of things be turned topsy-turvy to their way of thinking, the mountains of their pride laid low, and the crooked ways made plain; and they shall be brought to confess the folly of their pres-

ent judgments, the silliness of worldly standards that crumble and pass with the world. Those who on earth have put their hope only in things that perish will feel unspeakable bitterness to see that the lowly and poor, whom they despised, have run far ahead of them and taken by storm the kingdom of Heaven, while their own laborious and pretentious planning and toiling have served only to gather straw for the burning and laid up for them loss and woe.

We, who have the faith of Christ to help us to rectify our standards of value and to set us right in judging the true preciousness of things, should fear and shun the delusions of the world, which works so furiously for the things that perish and forgets so utterly the goods that endure forever. We should think and pray so as to be delivered from the blindness which sees only present gain and misses the glory to come, for which we all must strive.

For the judgments of God shall turn topsy-turvy the judgments of men, and unless we are on God's side and weigh all values of things as He weighs them, we are

wasting the precious stuff of which our lives are made and preparing for ourselves a bitter awakening when death shall disillusion us at last.

A PRIEST IN THE FAMILY

We must somehow stir up in the Catholic mothers and fathers of America a greater desire, not to say willingness, to see their sons and daughters become priests and Sisters. It is the glory of Catholic families in some countries of Europe, that each household is eager to see at least one of its members ascend the altar of God or become consecrated to His service in the religious life. For this the devoted mother and father offer their prayers to God. In their confidences to one another they discuss together which one of their little flock may be so happy as to receive God's call and join the army of His special followers. Though they prudently refrain from expressing their eagerness in so many words to their children, their devotion and zeal are contagious, and their prayers storm heaven, so that, as the years go on, they are often rewarded by the consolation of assisting at a First Mass, where their son is the celebrant, or at a religious clothing, where their daughter is espoused to Christ.

This lovely disposition of generosity and fervor, this desire to give their dearest children for the service of God, brings a blessing on the entire household, and in particular on the parents themselves. The sweetest consolation of their declining years is often found, not so much in the prosperity of those of their children who have remained in the world, as in the steadfast affection and fervent prayers of those who have devoted themselves to the service of God.

Very great will the merit of those parents be who, by their prayers and fervent desires, have paved the way for their sons and daughters to follow a priestly or religious vocation. One wishes ardently that their spirit may become the spirit of every Catholic household. How the world would be filled with a yet greater number of fervent priests and devoted religious men and women if our Catholic parents would pray more and desire more to see their children consecrated to God.

OUTINGS

It is high noon in the slums. The pitiless sun glares into the dusty and stifling canyons of the tenement-lined streets and makes the heat and the reek of them intolerable. The thin-legged youngsters, who have been making some pretense of play, feel their bare feet scorching on the asphalt, and wilt into the stifling areaways or slink to the thin shadows of buildings. Little whispering groups of them chatter, curse and bandy doubtful phrases together. This is the vacation of the little children of the very poor.

If a reward has been promised for a single glass of water given to another in Christ's name, what will be the recompense of those who help these little ones escape, even though it were only for a single glorious and never forgotten afternoon, from the killing reek of the summer slums, and from the contagion of body and of mind that haunts the little children there. It is so easy and so interesting to organize a day's outing

for these children! There are some enviable people who are naturally fond of every sort of picnic, and to them it will be a recreation to take a crowd of happy children to the country, feed them and shepherd them, and see them safely home, tired and happy, in the evening. Others, not so gifted by nature with a love for picnics, will have to do violence to their inclinations in order to take up this work, but they shall have a special reward for that.

So put down in your vacation note-book, in specially large letters, and in red ink if you are liable to overlook it, "Item: To take a party of the little children of the slums upon a picnic once a week or oftener next summer."

HELPING THE PRISONER

The work of visiting prisoners and, in particular, of helping prisoners on the eve of their discharge, well deserves the attention of our more mature Catholic lay folk, who have the time and talent for this particular work. Among the activities in behalf of the prisoners are: paying visits to the prisons and penitentiaries; distributing Catholic literature and articles of devotion; the preparation of prisoners for confession and communion, and sometimes also their instruction for baptism; giving entertainments in behalf of the prisoners, and similar acts of kindness. It is possible, too, to help the prisoners by gifts of such needful and useful articles as eye-glasses, clothing, etc.

Perhaps the most needful activity in behalf of prisoners is to assist them in the critical time on the eve of their discharge from prison and for the first few weeks after they are released. The prisoner who has served a long term in many cases, comes out

into a strange world. He has few friends and no associations. All his habits are formed on the rigid lines of prison life. Employment, too, is very uncertain, and he often needs tools to work at his trade, money to meet the expenses of room rent until employment is secured, and sometimes even railroad fare to reach his family in some distant locality.

Catholics of a charitable mind may very well bestir themselves to supply these needs as far as possible. It would seem that some provision should be made by the state to provide suitable lodging for these prisoners until they can get some employment, but in the meantime our Catholic societies can do something to tide them over this critical time after they have been released from prison. Of course, this work would only be safe and suitable for those of mature years and some experience, but men and women who have the necessary qualifications should find it an exceedingly useful and interesting activity.

IN HOTELS

A CATHOLIC traveling man was not long ago commenting on the difficulties he experiences in getting to Sunday Mass when upon his travels. "In hotels," he declared, "you find posted up in a prominent place an attractive bulletin telling the exact location of all the Protestant churches and the precise hours at which their services occur. But it is sometimes exceedingly hard to find out where the Catholic churches are located, and harder still to discover what time Mass may be heard there. It would be an excellent thing to begin a campaign to put in every hotel in the city signs bearing a list of Catholic churches, the time of services, and when one can conveniently get to confession and communion."

The suggestion is a capital one, and we commend it to our Catholic workers. It is very easy to obtain leave to put such a sign in hotels, and the list could be neatly printed and framed so that it will last indefinitely. Besides informing Catholic travelers of the

whereabouts of the churches and reminding them of their duties, such a sign would no doubt attract non-Catholics and encourage them to attend a service now and then and listen to some profitable instruction. The very size of the list would itself proclaim the growth of the church in that locality. It would be well to print on the card an announcement of the time of Sodality meetings also, and the statement that visiting Sodalists are invited to be present at the religious exercises of the Sodalities in the different churches. The expense of the printing and framing might be met by voluntary contributions. Public-spirited Catholics would no doubt be most willing to help carry out a work that promises so much good.

THE LOSS

THE American pastor of an Italian parish was speaking the other day of the great need of work for the children of the Italian immigrants. "I have in my parish," said he, "a strip seven blocks long by ten blocks wide, in which there are seven hundred Catholic families. These families average three children each, so that twenty-one hundred Catholic children live in that narrow strip of the city. And now comes the tragedy of it. Only a bare two hundred of all these children are going to a Catholic school. The other nineteen hundred are going to perdition."

"Couldn't you form catechism centers there," we asked, "and keep the children to the Faith by means of these?"

The pastor sighed. "Catechism centers there would be only a partial remedy," he said. "What we need is parish schools for our Italian children. They require a careful daily training to offset the bad influences of the slums and to implant in their receptive

hearts the principles of Catholic virtue. Nothing but schools will save them, and our great effort must be to provide the schools."

The pity of the situation—and this instance is but a typical one of many to be found throughout our large cities—is that the times will not stand still and allow us to plan and decide how we shall meet the urgent need of these poor children and then take leisurely steps to provide for it. The little ones grow up fast, and will soon be beyond the reach of that help which in their tender and impressionable years would be so effective and comparatively so easy. These children are full of promise for the Church, if only they are got now in the freshness of their youth and taught the religion of their fathers. But in five years they will have grown beyond our influence, and we shall have to bear the thought that girls and boys who should have been the good and solid material of a new generation of American Catholics have been quite lost to us, and lost something as well to decency and honor and to all that would have ennobled and sanctified their lives.

We spend great sums every year on painful efforts to help and save poor, ruined people who, for want of early training, have wasted their own lives and corrupted and spoiled many other lives besides. What an even better charity it would be to save these little ones before their course of ruin is well begun!

A YOUNG HEROINE

MARY—let us call her Mary, though that does not happen to be her name—had attended a retreat in which the practice of frequent and daily communion was thoroughly explained, and at the end of the retreat she joined the Frequent Communion Section, promising to go to communion four days in the week, all during vacation, if she could. When vacation came Mary was better than her promise, and nearly every day saw her at the altar, her face shining with desire to receive Our Lord.

Then one day an invitation came from some cousins in the country to spend a month with them in their delightful home, and Mary gleefully set out for the lakeside. For a whole day she was in a whirl of joy. There never was such a pleasant place, she thought—everyone was so kind, the woods were so lovely, the water was so delightful. It seemed that this was to be the happiest of all her vacations. When evening came

Mary bethought herself of the promise she had made in the Frequent Communion Section, and she inquired whether she could not receive Our Lord on the following morning. But her hosts, though they were interested and sympathetic, told her that it was quite impossible. They were too far from a church to think of going to communion every day; indeed, it would be quite difficult, they said, to get to Mass on Sunday. So they told Mary that it was impossible to keep her resolution, and advised her to forget about it and not let it spoil her pleasure.

But all the joy was gone for Mary. That evening she was pensive and sad, and the next morning she announced that she must be going home. "Why!" said her cousins in surprise, "aren't you enjoying your visit?" "I was, very much," said Mary, "but I promised to receive communion four times a week, and I don't like to disappoint Our Lord. So I'm going back to where I can keep my promise." And home she went, giving up a happy vacation to be true to her engagement with Our Lord.

One likes to think of the sort of woman

Mary will grow up to be, if she perseveres in her faithfulness to principle. And persevere she will, with the aid of frequent communion. To cultivate such characters as this is the great glory and achievement of Catholic schools and the new generation they are training, fed on the body of the Lord, will be a glory to the Church.

THE DANGER OF IT

We were chatting not long ago with a lady who has played a very leading part in Catholic charities, especially among the Italian children. She spoke of the foolish fears which often keep otherwise zealous young women from engaging in similar work.

"What a great number of good Catholic girls," said she, "graduate every year from our schools! How much help they could be to their neighbor and how much merit they could gain for themselves if they would only take up some active work during the interval between their graduation and the time when they settle down in life!

"But you would be surprised to see what flimsy reasons keep them from joining in work like this," she continued. Some of them think that they will lose social standing if they associate so much with the poor. They forget that some of the most distinguished women in America are busily engaged in charitable activities. Others think

that they will be bothered by the children whom they teach, outside of school hours. What a silly fear! The poor little children would not know where to go to find them, even if they wished to do so. In point of fact, it is hard enough sometimes to keep them with one even during the time of class or catechism.

But perhaps the strangest and most disturbing fear these timid people have is that of catching some contagious disease from their little charges.

"I rather think," she continued, looking at me with a mischievous smile, "that my experience ought to re-assure these latter doubters. I have been engaged in charitable work now for fifteen years among the little ones, and during all that time I have not caught so much as a cold."

SOME FUN SOMETIMES

It was on a through train in the North, and three young men were making themselves obnoxiously conspicuous by their hilarity, which, on second inspection, they had obviously gotten from the bottles that they were offering to one another. Presently one of the three, with flushed face and uncertain gait, came and sat down next to us and began a conversation. He was a Catholic, he said. He was a mechanic and a hard worker. He got five dollars a day for nine hours' work, and sometimes he had to work all Sunday into the bargain. Did he go to Mass on Sundays? Well—sometimes. But he supported his mother and sisters, now that his father was dead, and he never failed to give them their money out of his wages before he took any for himself. Why was he drinking the vile stuff that would turn him into a fool and make him do things that he would bitterly repent hereafter? "Oh say, now, Father," he stammered, "I work awful hard.

Life gets mighty dull to me. I've got to have some distraction and pleasure sometimes. So every six months—honest it isn't any oftener—I just break loose and come away and drink until I'm sick, and then I swear off for another spell. What can a fellow do? I've got to get away from myself. Don't a fellow have to have some fun sometimes?"

Well, he saw after some argument that it was all wrong, and he promised to leave off the drink and go to Mass on Sunday. One-half hour to God a week, for all that God had given him, was the argument that prevailed. Let us hope that he will keep both good resolutions. But his simple history should be a light to many comfortable people who cannot understand how promising young workingmen should sink so deep into drink and dissipation. The reason, dear sir or madam, is this: that these poor fellows crave some distraction and enjoyment just as you do, but they know only the silly and low enjoyment of dissipation. And, allowing of course, for the innate refinement and lofty instincts of us all who know better,

may it not be that with a like training, or want of it, we also should have gotten into a similar persuasion? It would be an immense service both to the state and to the Church to help our boys to form better views and cultivate better habits than this poor foster child of city streets. In bestirring ourselves to this end we shall only be giving freely what we have freely received.

PREVENTIVE CHARITY

THERE is a strange error in the minds of too many of our Catholic workers in charitable enterprises that it is, somehow, more meritorious to relieve distress than to prevent it, and that this modern talk of preventive charity is something of a fad, and not in accord with the traditions of Catholic almsgiving. Quite the contrary is true. So soon as the infant Church came from the catacombs she began at once the great work of preventive charity, and there is no device of modern investigators that has not its prototype in some merciful work of the Church to safeguard the weak and protect the unbefriended.

To-day, in every land, a host of devoted Religious are engaged in works of preventive charity that for efficiency and method put to blush the largely endowed non-Catholic enterprises. The orphanages are monuments of preventive charity. The devoted Sisters who go to nurse in the homes of the poor are adepts in preventive charity. The homes

for friendless boys, that are flourishing and increasing amongst us, are likewise most efficient in prevention, and so are the Protectorates of the Good Shepherd, the homes, the settlements, the day nurseries. Of all our tens of thousands of Catholic Sisters there is scarcely one whose work does not bring her some opportunity for preventive charity in the best and truest sense, and everyone who knows of their work knows how thoroughly our Sisters improve their opportunities for well-doing.

But great as our efforts are, the field still to be covered is distressingly large, and our needs are pitifully insistent. For want of more method and knowledge of preventive charity thousands of boys and girls are drifting into evil ways, who might very easily be saved to the Church and to right living if only our Catholic people understood the need of preventive charities to assist them. Oh, what a pitiful sight it is to see innocent children pouring into the jaws of temptation, exploited by evil and conscienceless men and women, doomed to hideous ruin while we, their own people, to whom they have most right to look for assistance, are gazing else-

where, working, if we are active at all, merely to save some ruined wrecks of humanity from the final catastrophe which their old vices have brought near! Any work of charity done in God's name and for His love has its blessing. Almsgiving is a high and glorious charity, and it is a heavenly deed to relieve the distress even of those whose own sins have been their undoing. But better even than these things is that forehanded and more efficacious charity which consists in keeping one's neighbor from distress, instead of letting him fall into it and then dragging him forth all besmirched and ruined. Ask yourself just for a moment, which would you rather—if you were a friendless and weak child exposed to the abominable corruptions of the world—that someone should let you go the vile gamut of crime and come to middle age a ruined and hideous thing, and then solicitously try to convert, relieve, and reform the wreck of your young innocence, or that he should befriend you in time, and by a little help in good season save you from bad influence, and help you to lead a clean life and never to need either alms or reformation?

HOUSES OF RETREAT

It is difficult to impress, even on zealous Catholic laymen, the need and benefit of houses of retreat. If one could make this clear to them we should without question see the land dotted with these centers of apostolic influence, these clearing houses of the soul, these sanitariums where our spiritual part has rest and cleansing and gains new vigor for the rubs and battles of life.

It is only the failure to realize the benefits for the average everyday Catholic man and woman of what is called the closed retreat which keeps this movement from running like a tide over all our land and deluging it with spiritual refreshment and heavenly fruitfulness.

The closed retreat is quite different in kind and results from either a mission or what is sometimes called a parish retreat, to wit, a course of instruction given for a few days to men or women who remain in their own homes and live their daily lives as before.

A closed retreat means to leave entirely one's usual environment and set aside three or four days for a sojourn in new surroundings in the quiet atmosphere of a retreat house, in the company of other earnest men or women, under the guidance of an experienced priest-instructor, and go through a series of reflections and meditations on the eternal truths, which long experience has shown to be possessed of a mighty efficacy to cleanse the soul from worldliness and strengthen the will in righteousness. Even before the war, Europe was already sown with houses of retreat. Belgium had numbers of them; France, Switzerland, the Catholic parts of Germany, were enthusiastic in making these exercises of the spirit. No less than a hundred such houses, large, commodious, in pleasant, quiet places devoted entirely to the work of the retreats, were scattered far and wide over the face of Europe. Who will doubt that the work shall go on until every country of Europe will have its ample supply of houses of retreat?

But we Catholics of America, when shall we do something worthy of our zeal and

affluence by erecting in this land also houses of retreat? We must all think and talk and work for houses of retreat. The occasional and seasonal retreats given at colleges and seminaries are excellent, but not enough. The ideal, to be swiftly realized, is to have a house of retreat in every center where there are Catholic men and women that have difficulties to be solved, sorrows to be lightened, sins to be forgiven, and a new start to be made along the steep and narrow way which leads to heaven.

IN YOUR HOUSE AND YOUR HEART

"We are well enough off, my husband and I," said she, "but there was something wanting in our lives. Just we two to live in our comfortable house while there are so many people in need and sorrow about us! I used to feel that we weren't doing our share, and were getting far more than our due of this life's comforts, and it made me feel uneasy and mean. Yet what could we do? I used to talk it over with Tom, and, while he didn't feel quite so uneasy as I, he owned that there should be something especial for us two to accomplish for God, in return for this goodness to us.

"Then the answer came, and her name was Mary. She was a sweet little mite of a girl, whose parents had both died, one soon after the other, and left her absolutely alone in the world. It was our good pastor who told me of her, and the thought came to me like a flash: 'Here is what you can do for

Our Lord—welcome this little mite as your own.' Well, Tom agreed, and you can't imagine what a difference the child has made in our lives.

"We are living life over again with that blessed girl. She has made us both young-hearted again. Why don't Catholic women who have the room in their house and their hearts adopt at least one orphan child? There are so many neglected and forlorn Catholic children waiting to be mothered! And every woman has room for a child in her heart."

It is true. Will someone set the blessed fashion of adopting at least one abandoned child? What a salvage we should see in innocent lives! What cheer and joy in now silent—and shall we say selfish?—homes! Come forward, Catholic women, and take one of these little ones to be your own—you who have room and to spare in your house and your heart.

ONE REASON

He was a very ardent convert to the Faith, and he was giving the reflections and reasons that had led him to see the truth of the Church's teachings. "One thing that struck me particularly," said he, "in regard to communion was that whenever my wife went frequently it was much more pleasant about the house. She was so good-tempered and self-controlled and dutiful. So I got to thinking that it would be a wise thing for me to encourage her to go as often as possible. Then came the thought that what was so good for her and had such a noticeable effect on her character might be the very thing for me as well. I was conscious of various defects in my own make-up, against which I had been struggling more or less unsuccessfully for years. Perhaps frequent communion might give me a grip on myself and a lever to pry out my own vices. So I began to investigate the Catholic religion, and found to my joy that I could say 'I believe.' And now

my wife is as anxious for me to go often to the sacraments as I am to see her faithful at frequent communion. We both agree that it has a beautiful effect on our home life together if we each receive often the Body of the Lord."

That is a true and touching saying. Sweet and wonderful sacrament that has the efficacy so to change hearts and ennoble souls! Ah, if our Catholic people only realized to the full the blessings that await them in frequent and daily communion, they would be more ready to accept the invitation of the Holy Father and go to the holy table often, and, if possible every day.

THE PIONEERS

We who find it so easy to practice our religious duties, who live so near to the church, and find so many conveniences at hand to help us to frequent confession and communion, have little notion of the struggle our forefathers went through to be faithful to their obligations.

Not long ago a pastor, who had been listening intently to an exhortation to frequent communion, was minded to tell us of what his own father and mother had gone through in the old days to get to Sunday Mass.

"Every Saturday afternoon," he said, "as soon as they were through with the day's work, they used to set out on foot for the far-off church. They would walk all night, with only such brief halts as were absolutely necessary for rest, and well on in the Sunday morning, jaded and footsore, they would reach the church, having walked some forty miles.

"Then they would go to confession, hear Mass and go to communion, take dinner at a house near by, and after a brief rest would start away for home and walk the whole night through, arriving home on Monday morning, in time for work again."

These sturdy pioneers, full of the spirit of faith and self-sacrifice, thought it no great thing to do this week after week, for it was the only way in which they could possibly get to confession and communion and hear the Sunday Mass.

Compared with such heroism as this, how slight is our effort and how poor our sacrifice. We could go to communion every day and assist at the adorable sacrifice of the Mass all the whole year round, with less effort than these holy pioneers made wearily plodding to and from Sunday Mass. To hear Mass and receive Holy Communion was worth far more than even the great efforts they made; and we, when we stint the little effort and self-sacrifice needed for frequent and daily communion, are losing much precious consolation and fruit, both here and in heaven.

THE DEFENSIVE ATTITUDE

It is perhaps the antecedents of the Catholic body in the United States which have put us, consciously or unconsciously, into a perpetual attitude of defense and apology and protest. Coming from lands where the Church had been for so long in the attitude of a more or less persecuted body, it was only natural that the Catholic colonists of the United States should retain for some time the proneness to defense and protest which they had acquired in an atmosphere of hostility and injustice. An active or a passive persecution was so habitually their lot that they grew used to the attitude of protest, just as a man who has often been struck by a cruel enemy stronger than he grows used to the gesture of warding off a blow.

We have, therefore, for many years shown in our Catholic body the virtues and the defects of a persecuted people. Patience under discriminations, the resigned endurance of attacks and silence under abuse and

contumely, are virtues which persecution must needs increase in those who are subject to its Spartan discipline. On the other hand, a bold, courageous striking down of injustice which is aimed at a whole people, an assured and confident attitude that scares off the aggressor, the open and firm maintenance of all lawful rights and even of just privileges—these things are not to be expected where persecution has long worn out the endurance of a folk and shown the uselessness of any but a passive and politic resistance.

But it is high time, for our own sake and that of the world, that we Catholics of the United States should manfully throw off the attitude of mere defense and protest and should begin to assert in no mean way the rights and abilities to which our citizenship and our achievements alike entitle us. We are no longer an insignificant minority, misunderstood and despised, with no ability to set ourselves right in the eyes of our fellow citizens and no influence in the counsels of the state and the nation. We are a powerful and important section of the people, the

most mighty single interest perhaps in all this commonwealth. The virtues of patience and endurance and the quiet practice of protest and defense, which once became us in the days of our insignificance and weakness, no longer become us in this hour of our influence and strength. That attitude, which was once virtuous and prudent, is now become pusillanimous and unwise. We cannot shirk the grave responsibilities which our numbers, our strength, the unmatched chance of leadership and initiative and the possession of Catholic principles has given us in this perplexed and changing age of social problems. To remain passive and on the defensive now, when the Church and the state alike require of us a strong and constructive stand is a fault against the virtues of patriotism and religion together. No longer persecuted save as we tolerate persecution, no longer on the defensive save when we fail to make ourselves formidable to our enemies, we must adopt the great tactics of General Foch and defend ourselves by attacking, making our principles clear and making our enemies beware.

YOUR SHARE

One of the most injurious excuses which Catholics can offer for not enlisting in the lay auxiliary and for failing to help on the activities and interests of the Church, is that they are too busy. The work of God must somehow be done. It is the most important work in the world. No man, or woman, or group can do the work alone. There is a work which only the clergy can accomplish and there is work which only the laity can fulfill. Your share of the work awaits you in your own surroundings, in your family, your neighborhood, your city. It is your part of God's work, and if you do not do it it will remain forever undone, because God has set it apart for you. To-day's work is not to-morrow's work. To-day's inspiration and opportunity will not return again. You may crowd part of it into to-morrow but the chances are that you will not, because to-morrow God has waiting for you other work to do. He does not put too much upon us. He never de-

mands impossibilities. But He does wish and require a faithful and daily service from us all.

We give a part of our time each day to our own body to feed and clothe it. We give a part to our mind, to recreate and refresh it. We give a part to our business or occupation to further and prosper it. God wishes us also to give a part to Him. We serve God well when we serve well, for His love, our neighbor and the Church.

Therefore, all our lives, God has asked little services from us from day to day. Sometimes He has asked us to help some needy man or woman whom He put in our path. Sometimes He has asked us to speak a kindly and helpful word to another. At other times, He has asked us to do something for the interests of the Church. God spoke, as He always speaks, by opportunities and inspirations. The opportunity is an invitation. The prudent and pious thought of a good action is an expression of God's wishes. We are not obliged to accept His invitations, but He expects us to account for them. He asks only a part of our time, but He

wishes us to give that part, small though it be, faithfully and cheerfully.

To say then that you are too busy to do your share of God's work, means that your own private needs and occupations are more important than the needs of your neighbor and the Church. It means that you put yourself first, and then allow no second. It means that, provided *your* way and *your* work are safe and clear, you do not give any time nor thought to God's.

Yet God does not demand very much. He only expects you to give some proportionate amount of your time and your money to His work. He leaves you free to choose when and where you will invest them. A proportionate amount may be a small amount in itself—and you will never feel it. When we refuse to do our work, we not only injure those for whom it is to be done. We injure those who must supply our work for us, our fellow Catholics who may be even more busy, but who are certainly more generous than ourselves. Ah, let us all do our share!

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